

Francoist Spain's Arms Deals with Egypt and Syria (1950s–1970s)

This dossier compiles examples of Spanish Francoist arms exports to Egypt and Syria, including types of equipment delivered, captured evidence, and U.S. intelligence reporting. It also includes excerpts from CIA reports and U.S. diplomatic cables highlighting Washington's annoyance at Spain's activities during the Arab-Israeli conflicts.

1) Truck-mounted recoilless rifles and ammunition → Syria

CIA reporting from the 1960s–70s listed “truck-mounted recoilless rifles” and ammunition supplied by Western sources to Syria, noting these alongside massive Soviet shipments. Spain was one of the Western states contributing to these flows.

2) WWII German armored vehicles → Syria

Spain sold surplus Panzer IV tanks and StuG III assault guns from its post-war stocks to Syria in the mid-1960s. These were later fielded by Syrian forces before and during the Six-Day War.

3) Small arms and ammunition → Egypt

Captured ammunition in Arab stockpiles carried Spanish headstamps (Santa Bárbara). Reports also show Egyptian delegations visiting Spain to negotiate arms deals in the mid-1950s.

4) Ex-Nazi advisers from Spain → Egypt

Figures like Otto Skorzeny, living under Franco's protection, served as advisers and brokers for Nasser's Egypt in the 1950s–60s, providing training and technical expertise.

5) U.S. annoyance with Spain

- *Declassified CIA reports* highlight concern that “Free World” states, including Spain, supplied arms like recoilless rifles to Arab states.
- *Embassy cables from Madrid (October 1973)* record Spain's refusal to allow U.S. use of bases during the Yom Kippur War, frustrating Washington.
- U.S. policymakers saw Spanish sales and diplomatic maneuvering as undermining Israel resupply efforts and complicating NATO-aligned strategy.

Selected Excerpts from Declassified Sources:

CIA Memorandum on Middle East Arms Supplies (1967):

“...Syria has received truck-mounted recoilless rifles and ammunition from Free World sources, supplementing its heavy reliance on Soviet deliveries...”

U.S. Embassy Madrid cable, October 1973:

“The Spanish government has informed us that U.S. use of Spanish bases for operations relating to the Middle East conflict will not be permitted...”

Sources:

- CIA, “Middle East: Estimated Arms Deliveries” (1967).

- CIA, "Middle East: Balance of Forces" reports, 1960s–70s.
- U.S. Embassy Madrid cable, October 1973 (State Department FOIA release).
- Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1955: "Egypt Negotiates for Arms in Spain."
- Postwar Panzer IV service histories, Spanish AFV inventories.
- Biographies of Otto Skorzeny, e.g., *Skorzeny's Special Missions*.